

unique parade of searching inward and invoking the *sublime* by keeping harmony with Nature and to the extent of total absorption with the cosmos. The outer form of Medieval Indian temples justifies this. Furthermore example of harmony with Nature is experienced in all the Indian dances viz. Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniattam, Kathakalli or Kathak including all the other dances of rest of the country. The dancer in Indian dances pats the ground with her/his feet with assertive acceptance of gravity whereas the in European Ballet dances the dancer defies gravity while taking continuous leaps only to inevitably fall-back. European dances are representational and physical whereas Indian dances are both abstract and representational whilst the physicality of expression is lost in the therein evoked *sublime* despite intricately skilled play of body-work. However any comparison between Indian and European art is certainly anachronistic in today's context of globalisation yet we can at least say that the presence of *sublime* in Indian art and culture is so internally rooted that some tired art historians while vainly trying through their intellectual marathon tag it as 'unreal' and throw it into the oblivion bin they easily call *mystic*. To quote A. K. Coomaraswamy "Very likely the mediaeval and oriental world will seem strange. We are romanticists; it is because we know so little about it that we talk of the 'mysterious East' and describe as 'mystical' much that is merely expressed with the precision of a technical vocabulary to which we are not accustomed. To put it plainly, no one can be regarded as qualified to expound the philosophy of mediaeval or Indian art who is not familiar with mediaeval Latin and Sanskrit literature, at least in translation."

Yet the scope to relish mediaeval art is not restricted to knowing Sanskrit but

with only condition that it is not approached with 'mere mind'; to quote Coomaraswami again "Middle Ages and the East held that beauty has to do with cognition and the operative habit is an intellectual virtue." Moreover the *sublime* invoked in the medieval Indian sculpture breaks all inhibitions of the beholder's mind automatically to enter the realm of *sublime* with complete surrender of intellect. However despite many 'awakened' intellectuals among us are still expected to partake the debate whether the medieval Indian art are 'abstract' or 'representational'; at least in order to reassert as ourselves being part of the this 'world of minds'.

In the Indian mediaeval sculptures and paintings the very representation of themes are so engrossingly subjective that the mechanism of 'abstraction' remained catalytically instrumental and controlled the 'vocality' of 'representation'. Perhaps this is the reason for there had been no contention for perfection of anatomy, exactitude of perspective and 'corporeality of form' as the criterion for realism in Indian mediaeval Art. If such has been the creative ethos in Indian mediaeval art which is unshaken despite its own country's chronic political misfortune, and thereby easy vent of unfiltered influences, then there certainly is a clairvoyant awareness of age old 'high science of trust' in Indian cultural core which is resolutely aware of the occult phenomenon of 'stillness' from within as against the illusive intermittent movements of the mundane. This resolute awareness about the stillness from within as against the illusive intermittent movements of the mundane (the awareness about 'truth from within' discovered through the Vedic age and later '*anitabodh*' or the awareness to the 'truth of



impermanence' through the medieval age re-established by Sidhharth Gautam, the Budhdha) had embodied and maintained the articulation of the eternal realism as the resultant of sempiternal omnipresence of coeval action of *abstraction* and *representation* in Indian mediaeval art and even the contemporary art and culture till date.

However this natural amalgamation of *abstraction* and *representation* is so inbuilt in Indian art and culture from the time immemorial that it surprisingly never made any conspicuous issue by way of creative revolutionary upheaval or manifestation such as that happened in the European visual and intellectual culture under the parasol of apocalyptic '20<sup>th</sup> century Modernism', with their groundbreaking *recherche* on 'non-representational art' specified as "Abstract Expressionism" and "Gestural Abstraction". Even Harold Rosenberg in a stance of his review of the exhibition "Two Hundred Years of American Sculptures" infers 'Gestural Abstraction' to metaphysical and *sublime*. But there his concern with 'abstraction' is the *real* breakthrough from the *ideal* of American Social Realism. What our concern here is that in Indian mediaeval art and culture *abstraction* had never been a breakthrough from the *ideal* but the *ideal* had been constantly spontaneously utilized and at times manipulated back to *eternal realism* through the metaphysics of *sublime*. And hence there continued an awareness of '*anityaboth*' i.e. of the cycle of 'eternal realism' of *real* turning to *ideal* and then *ideal* turning into *real* and so on endlessly. This is the reason why Europe could never envisage cinema with song till now and perhaps it can never because of its crude sense of rationalism founded by its father

figure philosophical mentors like Descartes and obviously Stalin; whereas Indian cinema 'began to talk' with the songs. There is an instrumentation of *abstraction* through metaphysical spontaneity of *sublime* imbedded in Indian cultural core that renews the *ideal* into *real* as auto controlled by the conscious morality or the *dharma* (the Nature's law). A heroine singing her love song for her absent lover hero in Indian cinema invokes the *sublime* where *abstract* and *representation* are in a perfect synthesis for three to five minutes duration (the usual duration of songs in Indian cinema) to the satisfaction of the spectators. Moreover an interesting analogy of European 'Surrealism' can also be seen in Indian cinema when a hero can lift an SUV singlehandedly and throw on to ten hooligan opponents which even Mr. James Bond can't dare to do because of his strict abidance with the hitherto established corporeal realism by his crude rational ancestors. Thus Europe had to precipitate "Surrealism" from the corporeal realism which was finally denounced as 'inhumanly regimental' by the post World War II cultural ethos of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. This is enough to establish that Indian art never had the crisis of separating either *abstract* from *representation* or *surreal* from the *real* because of its awareness of *spontaneity* and *sublime*. Some historians even went ahead to declare that Indian art in a general sense could be described as an amalgamation of 'abstract' philosophical concepts of Aryan origin and the 'representational' or even naturalistic trends of Dravidian civilization. But despite our notorious spree in importing every European idea that had the tinge of modernism (and now Postmodernism too) there inarguably is an infallible awakening of consciousness as the undercurrent of Indian culture which is aware enough of the

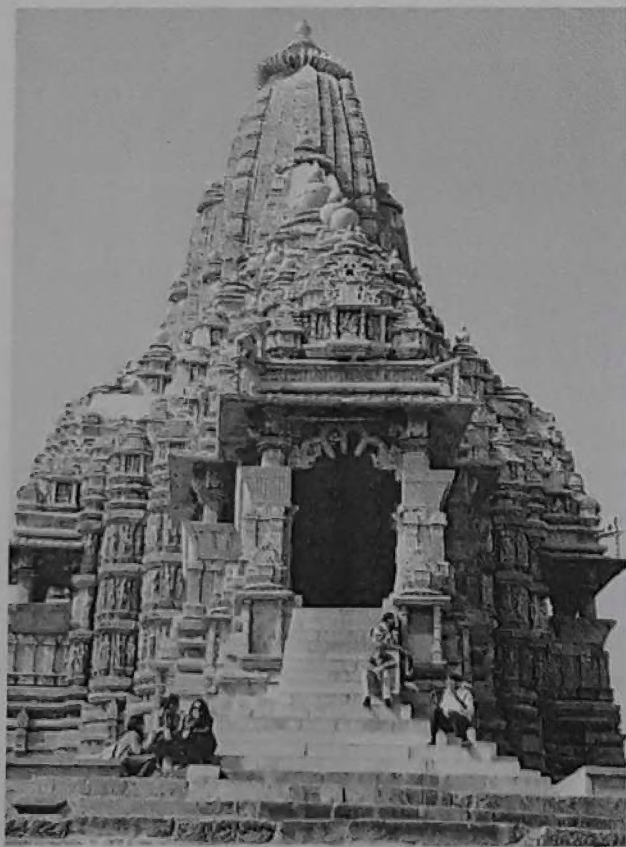


realm of *sublime* as the actual reason for such an inseparable interrelationship between *abstract* and *representation*. *Sublime* should not be mistaken here with the general meaning of 'mystical' as we discussed earlier whereas *sublime* here is all about the experience of 'stillness'; the wisdom awakened as resultant between 'emotion' and 'reason'.

The unique quality of Indian medieval temples is that despite the non-corporeal and suggestive rendering of imageries in relation to their architectural spatial distortion (both internal and external) creates metaphysical ambiance which don't sport intellectual aesthetics but a 'sublime aesthetics' rather by using the metaphor.

However an obvious question still arises that despite perennial definitions by art cognoscente, down the decades, of *abstraction* or *abstract art* in the ongoing creative and intellectual culture, why

*abstract* had never been an issue away from *representational* or *concrete* in general contemporary culture and art of India? The incoming answer certainly suggests at the indivisible interrelationship between *abstract* and *representation*. An open secret that the phenomenon of abstraction in Indian art itself is the hidden vacuum of metaphysical understandings of existence eventually physically manifested through art and culture. According to the ongoing fervour of Indian colloquial knowledge *abstract* and *concrete* are indivisible components of the constitutional whole i.e. the truth articulated through the harmonious interrelationship of 'emotion' and 'reason' which Budhdha denoted as *pragya* or the wisdom. One might even go to say going far ahead of the insight of Rosenberg that 'abstract' is the occult experience of the para-real detail of truth where experienter's (artist's) hitherto accumulated egocentric skills in academic rendering (*mimesis*) of the apparent world becomes anachronistic and hence representational forms breaks away or better to say the details of the 'experience of the present' becomes so overwhelming that the details of 'identicalness to visible world' or the 'intelligibility of form' becomes insignificant. But a question also arises why the naturally 'unseen' or 'unknown' becomes an 'experience-irresistible' by way of evading the so-called representational laws or 'intelligibility of form'? We all are well acquainted that European 20<sup>th</sup> century Modernism's greatest contribution to the world art is its enlightened discovery about the importance of process of art over the final art product. Hence we can anticipate that penetrating detail results in *distortion* which in turn becomes the take-off point for *abstraction*.





This wisdom automatically suggests at the fact that *distortion* has been the forerunner of *abstraction* through modernist resolutions that broke all discipline laid down by Greek school of intellectual aesthetics and endowed the process of art an importance to the extent we give importance to the 'present' or the 'instant'. Hence we can assume that 20<sup>th</sup> century European modernist resolutions had resituated the process of art into the importance of 'present'. An analogy of European Modernism's importance of 'present' could be drawn to the concept of 'here and now' in Buddhism discovered some 2500 years ago by Buddha. Any technical pursuit giving importance to 'present' preserves the allegorical record of 'occurring in the instant'. 'Occurring in the instant' in a creative process, proposed here, is the micro experience of the macro reality and it takes place when medium and *idea* meet with utmost possibility of absolute synthesis in such a way that none of either *medium* or *idea* could be brought back into their previous state. In Indian mediaeval temples rock as *medium* is so tamed as to consume the *idea* (both scientific and spiritual) in an absolute synthesis that the inner and outer of the temple becomes an experience of *sublime*. Here the 'abstract' and 'representation' is so amalgamated that none of them make a separate statement. Most spontaneously seen in totality the form of the architecture in Indian mediaeval temples is abstract and even coming closer when we are subjectively involved with each detail of figuration then their very sublime expression in juxtaposition to the abstract patterns around creates a strange vacuum in the spectator's mind that the spectator is overwhelmed with the experience of sublime. Here he/she becomes the *rasika* (the 'experiencer' beholder of art) while the process of

experiencing of *rasa* (aesthetic pleasure) becomes so overwhelming that the *rasika* or 'experiencer' is lost. This stance of 'experiencer being lost' is well defined by Tilopa, the Tibetan Buddhist monk as the state of *mahamudra* (meaning 'ultimate gesture') a state beyond mind where the experiencer is lost in communion with the eternal realism where only the 'experience' remains which is the state of *sublime*. And again this overwhelming process of experiencing evoked here is through the *sublime* which is so 'present' that the *rasik* or the artist (creator) is also lost. This is the most significant reason for why we cannot locate the identity of the artist or the artists all together in the Indian medieval paintings and sculptures. This happened because the ego-faceted-individuality of the *rasik* or the artist is lost in the so evoked overwhelming *sublime*. *Sublime* in Indian aesthetic sensibility is a void and abstraction takes place in this void through the *representation* just as the 'abstract' transparency of *soul* energy in the process of 'participation' with the other energies of mundane takes the representational solidity of *body*. Here the *body* is the maximum possible reduction of the *soul* while the identicalness of their bearings is because of the 'participation' of their *souls* in the *dharma*; the concept of medieval theory of beauty. According to this theory of beauty *Dharma*, meaning Nature's Law, is binding all beings into single sense of abidance. Indian medieval art had explored the universal sense of beauty ages ago through the constantly renewed 'experience' of eternal realism in the form of *sublime* that down the ages remained indelible in its culture by any external influences. Rather we can say that all the external influences to Indian art and culture is swallowed-in by its *sublime*.